

**Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2006**

A meeting of the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee (VCCAC) was held on Wednesday, March 8, 2006 in Conference Room 2K-115 at the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center, 1201 Broad Rock Road in Richmond.

Members Present:

Vince Burgess, Ex-officio
Julia Dillon
Karen Olichwier

Louis Rossiter
Bill Van Thiel, Ex-officio

Members Absent:

Worth Kenyon
James Walker, Ex-officio
Joseph Williams

Others Present:

Michael Phaup, Director, Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center
Steven Combs, Assistant to Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services
Roz Trent, Director of Communications, Department of Veterans Services
Andrew Edwards, Department of Veterans Services

Materials Distributed:

Draft minutes of December 7, 2005 meeting; 2006 Legislative/Budget

Welcome

Commissioner Vince Burgess called the meeting of the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee to order at 11:10 a.m. After each member gave brief introductions, the roll was called, and a quorum was determined with 5 of the 8 member committee recorded as present.

Review and Approval of December 7, 2005 Minutes

A **motion** was made by Louis Rossiter, seconded by Julia Dillon, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2005 meeting.

Commissioner Burgess introduced Michael Phaup, Director of the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center. Mr. Phaup gave a brief history of the VA Medical Center and updated the Committee on occurrences at the Center. His comments were as follows:

- McGuire is called the second largest federal building in Virginia --1 ½ million square feet under one roof. The facility has a very active mental center, with 2100 employees. According to traffic studies done, approximately 5,000 people come to the campus daily (includes employees, guests, patients, etc.). The facility is the tertiary care facility with the state of Virginia as it relates to VA hospitals. 20% of all patients come to the facility

from Hampton, Salem and West Virginia. 45,000 patients are seen per year; 8-10,000 come from other locations.

- McGuire has the only in-house heart transplant program in the VA. 10-11 heart transplants are performed per year; 300 have been performed since it began. The facility also performs liver transplants and is in the process of beginning to perform lung transplants.
- The Parkinson's Research Unit is located in the facility. It is #6 in the country. The Educational and Research Program specializes in movement disorders and with patients afflicted with Parkinson's disease.
- The facility has one of four polytrauma programs. It was originally intended for the aging veteran with traumatic injuries. Since going to war, the unit is used almost exclusively for active duty veterans that are returning. Presently, there are about 8 very young service members (Reserve and Guard servicemen/women who have been deployed and have been injured) who have suffered traumatic brain injuries through unit percussion as opposed to a direct hit. However, they also suffer from spinal cord injury or loss of limb, sight and hearing. The youngest patients are 17 years old; the oldest patients range around 45 years old. Within the last two years, the facility has received about 200 active duty service members, staying anywhere from 2-4 weeks to 16-20 weeks, depending on their response and adjustments to treatment.
- The facility has made adjustments in "thinking outside the box" in accommodating the young servicemen/women, many of whom have spouses, and are bringing children with them. Presently, there are three babies in the facility, two mothers - 19 & 20 years old, 2 babies - 1 year old and 2 ½ year old. The facility is making sure that necessities are on-hand, such as diapers, cribs, baby food, etc. In addition, the facility is housing the parents of the servicemen, who are also young, and come to be with their children. Visiting hours have been adjusted to accommodate the families.
- The facility has the largest spinal cord injury (100-bed) acute unit. There is a 50-day stay. There is a 120-bed nursing home care unit.

Mr. Phaup expressed that the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center looks forward to working closely with the new Sitter-Barfoot Care Center project. He stated that the project will be a mutually beneficial opportunity for both facilities.

Commissioner Burgess informed the Committee that Mr. Phaup had been instrumental in trying to establish the Fisher House on the campus of McGuire. He stated that hopeful results should be seen after the General Assembly Session. Mr. Phaup stated that presently the facility uses hospitality houses downtown (renting approximately 12 rooms a night) for some of the patient's families providing food and transportation.

Karen Olichwier asked if McGuire had a grieving program for the parents of servicemen who have serious injuries. Mr. Phaup responded that although there is a grieving unit, many parents

are not ready to “grieve,” but rather, are so fixated on restoring their loved-ones to health that the parents literally get sick themselves (lack of eating, resting, exercise, etc.). The parents want a total focus on getting their children well, rather than on themselves.

Mr. Phaup stated that one of the things the facility struggles with is trying to find a transitional housing unit for the “younger” veteran in an environment that they are comfortable with. Currently, they are placed with older patients, and this causes concern for both the younger veteran and his/her family.

More discussion ensued. After which, Commissioner Burgess thanked Mr. Phaup for meeting with the Committee.

Commissioner Burgess introduced Andrew Edwards, DVS’s webmaster. He mentioned that DVS is in the process of updating and refining its website, and Mr. Edwards would be in charge of maintaining the site.

Legislative and Budget Update

Steven Combs focused the Committee’s attention to the Legislative/Budget Update information sheet that had been included in the agenda packets. Commissioner Burgess thanked Steve for providing updates to members during the legislative session.

Mr. Combs stated that it has been a very good year for the Department, and especially for the care centers. He reported as follows:

Virginia Veterans Care Center – 240-Bed Facility

- FY 06 base budget
 - 225 employees
 - \$12,914,745 (NGF)
- Governor Warner’s proposed budget adds 30 positions in FY 07.
 - 25 Certified Nursing Assistants (will afford opportunity to institute a CNA Training Program)
 - 2 Licensed Practical Nurses
 - 1 Registered Nurse
 - 1 Dietary Worker
 - 1 Housekeeper
- Proposed operating budget increases
 - FY 07 - \$14,839,898 (NGF)
 - FY 08 - \$14,970,237 (NGF)

Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center

- Construction budget (160-bed project)
 - Governor Warner’s proposed budget added \$3.22 million (GF)
 - Governor Kaine submitted a budget amendment for an additional \$404,000 (GF)
- Operating Budget (160-bed project) – Governor Kaine submitted a budget amendment that would authorize:
 - FY 07 - 50 positions; \$787,100 (NGF)

- FY 08 – 183 additional positions (total 233 positions); \$11,400,000 (NGF)
- Treasury loans will be acquired for the startup; loans to be repaid with operating revenue as go through the year. Goal is to reach break-even point by the end of the first full year of operation.
- 80-bed addition is ranked #78 of 129 projects on the priority list for USDVA funding (65% of \$8 million project, or \$5.2 million.)
 - Virginia has already pledged to fund 35% of project costs - \$2.8 million
 - The project is likely 3-4 years out

Hampton Road Veterans Care Center – ranked 128 of 129 on federal priority listing

- Governor Kaine and Delegate Cox submitted budget amendments pledging Virginia to fund \$14.6 million – 35% of the \$41.5 million project
- Delegate Cox also submitted HB 1383, which pledges Virginia to funding \$14.6 million for the project. This has passed the House and Senate unanimously.

Fisher House at McGuire VA Medical Center

- Approximately \$4 million project
 - \$2 million from Fisher House Foundation
 - \$2 million from local sources
- Governor Kaine submitted a budget amendment for \$1 million for a Fisher House at the McGuire VA Medical Center – this would be half of the “local” money, meaning that only \$1 million would have to be raised to build a Fisher House at McGuire.
 - The Senate Finance Committee approved \$1 million
- Delegate Lingamfelter submitted a budget amendment for \$1 million for a Fisher House at the McGuire VA Medical Center – this would be half of the “local” money, meaning that only \$1 million would have to be raised to build a Fisher House at McGuire
 - The House Appropriations Committee approved \$500,000
- The Senate and House differences will have to be worked out in the budget conference committee

Commissioner Burgess thanked Mr. Combs for his report.

Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center Operational Plan Update

Bill Van Thiel reported as follows:

- He is currently reviewing agreements, policy/procedure manuals
- No advertising for staff as of yet. An anticipated date for hiring is February 2007. The Care Center Administrator would be hired first. When he is hired, he will have resumes for department heads.
- The construction of the facility is 25 days behind in the construction timeline; however, in actuality, other things have been done ahead of schedule. When the weather changes, things will proceed rapidly. Cinder block walls have been put up; 60-70% of the slab/footers have been poured (well ahead in this process). The building will have pre-fab framing. Pre-fabbing saves money and is of a higher quality.

- Project Manager, Ron White, DGS, will do inspections. There will be a construction trailer with an on-site supervisor.
- The drainage problem has been resolved.
- There is an issue with the retention pond to hold rain water. There is rock approximately 8 ½ inches higher than desired at the bottom of the retention pond. Dynamite blasting has taken place. This has added cost: \$200.00 a cubic yard to blast rock and another \$200.00 to haul it away. Discussions have occurred to possibly placing the rock around the site. Bill Van Theil suggested that VCU might have art students who might take this on as a landscaping project instead of hauling the rock away. Lou Rossiter stated that he knew of someone who might be interested in this project.

Lou Rossiter asked what the biggest risks were. Commissioner Burgess stated that he has heard of no concerns other than normal construction issues. The projected opening date of the facility is July 2, 2007. This gives a 60-day lead time.

Hampton Road Care Center Report

Copies of the Executive Summary of the Hampton Roads Care Center Study had been sent to Committee members. Commissioner Burgess stated that according to the study, there is a definite need to have a facility in the Tidewater area. The study indicated that there is strong support for a second care center - one on the Peninsula/one on the south boarder of Hampton Roads.

He stated that there is strong support to have the care center located next to the Hampton VA Medical Center. The Hampton VA is willing to provide donated land. The area currently has a facility on it, but the Hampton VA is willing to tear down the structure to construct the new care center facility on the land. Commissioner Burgess stated that the Administrator of the Hampton Roads facility, Joseph Williams, is a member of the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee, and he has been very supportive in sharing resources.

Commissioner Burgess stated that there are strong indications to build a 4th care center in the Hampton Roads area. At this time, he is unsure as to whether to proceed in this direction or look at another part of the state. He challenged VCCAC members to begin thinking on how to approach this issue. Bill Van Thiel stated that the facility should stay in the Virginia pipeline.

To meet the release of the federal priority list, applications must be submitted by September 15th. Commissioner asked that at the next meeting, the VCCAC begin talking about a strategy for determining a location for a fourth care center. targetting the September 15th deadline.

Commissioner Burgess asked if any type of census data needed to be prepared for the next meeting discussion regarding location and strategy for the next care center. Lou Rossiter suggested that the JLARC Report on the Aging Population in Virginia be reviewed. Karen Olichwier suggested that information be reviewed on how to address the psychological problems of younger veterans coming back from war. Julia Dillon suggested that the committee not only look at what is going on today, but also what will be happening in the future.

Commissioner Burgess asked Roz Trent to provide a link to the Legislative Information Services website when sending out the draft minutes. He asked members to review the website and bring comments/suggestions to the next meeting. In the meantime, he encouraged members to submit any other suggestions/information to him.

New Business

There was no new business.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Burgess acknowledged Bill Van Thiel and thanked him for taking the lead in the developing the operational plan for the Sitter-Barfoot Care Center. He commended him for the time and effort taken in reviewing the architectural design and construction of the facility.

Commissioner Burgess noted that the department has been very fortunate to have bi-partisan support in the General Assembly. He said that indications for a fourth care center are because of the bi-partisan support, and that the department should position itself to take full advantage and move forward. He stated that the focus at this point will be to manage expectations. Each legislator will be thanked for their support. He advised the committee that he would continue to keep them it up-to-date on legislative matters.

Members' Comments

Members gave brief comments/input regarding the meeting.

Schedule Next Meeting (date/location)

The next meeting of the VCCAC will be held on Wednesday, June 14, 2006 from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center. Exact room location will be communicated to members.

Commissioner Burgess suggested that the 3rd quarter meeting will be held at the Virginia Veterans Care Center.

Adjourn

There being no future business, meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.